

The University of Chicago

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ISLE OF PATMOS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

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Chicago, Illinois

LESS than a century and a quarter ago, in 1819, Edward Everett of Harvard University brought back from Constantinople the first manuscripts of the Greek New Testament ever known to have reached America. By the beginning of the twentieth century, no fewer than thirty-eight such manuscripts had reached this side of the Atlantic. During the years since 1900, however, more than two hundred manuscripts are known to have been brought to our shores, and America has become a rich source of information for the student of the Greek New Testament.

In his catalogue which was completed in 1937, Kenneth W. Clark was able to list 256 manuscripts as being in America at that time.¹ In spite of Professor Clark's comprehensive work, however, America's manuscript treasures have remained largely unknown. Many of our manuscripts have never been collated, or at least they have never been collated in full. A careful, detailed study of almost any one of them will prove of value to the student who is interested in the history of the text, in iconography and ornamentation, in palæography, and in the various questions of provenance and of the relationships of various manuscripts one to another.

The manuscript which is the object of this study, while not of any great textual value, has proven to be of great interest in other respects. It is the codex in the University of Chicago collection which is known as the Janina Gospels. It is identified as number 141 in the University of Chicago collection and as number 2409 in the Gregory-Dobschütz list. It was brought to America in 1916 from Janina, the capital of the province of Epirus in northwestern Greece, by Dr. E. C. Despotēs, a Chicago dentist. In April, 1931, it was purchased by the University of Chicago.

Only fifty-five folios of the Janina Gospels are now known to be extant. With the exception of some intervening lacunæ it now contains the text of the Gospel of Matthew from 12:41 to the end of the gospel, the chapter list for the Gospel of Mark, and the text of the Gospel of Mark from 1:10 to 7:27, although originally it undoubtedly was a Four Gospels manuscript. The extant folios of the Janina Gospels now measure 21.5 cm. by 16.7 cm., although they were perhaps originally larger as they show evidence of having been trimmed. The text is arranged in two columns of twenty-five lines each. The block of text measures 13.4

¹ Kenneth W. Clark, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

cm. by 10.4 cm. Each column of text is 4.9 cm. in width. The total thickness of the manuscript in its present condition is 1.8 cm. The covers have been lost.

Our codex is fairly well supplied with nontextual material, much of which has been designed for the purpose of making the Tetraevangelion more useful. Among such nontextual material which it contains are lectionary equipment, chapter lists, titloi, chapter numbers, Eusebian section numbers, and quire numbers.

There is very little ornamentation to be found in the Janina Gospels. The use of vermilion ink throughout the codex for the purpose of writing the decorative capitals in both the text and the rubrics, the Eusebian section numbers, the chapter numbers, and the titloi, however, does furnish a certain ornamentation for the entire manuscript. One feature which should be mentioned in connection with the decoration of the manuscript is the ornamentation which the scribe attached to certain letters. Quite often when the symbol for *and* (*καί*) stands at the beginning of a line of text, or in the bottom line of text, he extended its "tail" until it reached the edge of the parchment. In the centre of this "tail," he placed a decoration consisting of two very short lines, at right angles to the "tail," between which was a small diamond. A short line was also often used by the scribe to ornament his deltas, epsilons, zetas, and taus.

The scribe who wrote the Janina Gospels wrote an attractive minuscule, semicursive hand. It is very seldom that more than three or four letters are found linked together. The letters are pendent from the ruling line. The script is firm and clear, and it is extremely legible.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Janina Gospels was written by the same scribe who wrote the Tetraevangelion known as Sinai 157 (Gregory 1194). A careful study of the script of both manuscripts has proven this. A colophon at the end of the Sinai codex indicates that that manuscript was written on the island of Patmos by one who signed himself "John a Monk" for Theoktistos, the abbot of the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist. The Theoktistos for whom the manuscript was written was abbot of the monastery from 1128 to 1157. We are, thus, able not only to date within fairly narrow limits the Janina Gospels but also Sinai 157 as well. Both manuscripts must have been written in the middle third of the twelfth century. Sinai 157 has been known to scholars for many years, but it has been erroneously assigned by Gardthausen to the tenth century and by Gregory to the tenth or the eleventh century. Professor W. H. P. Hatch, however, on the basis of palæographical evidence, correctly assigned it to the twelfth century.² Someone who also signed himself "John a

²W. H. P. Hatch, *The Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament at Mount Sinai* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1932), Plate XXXII.

Monk" wrote the will of Theoktistos. This will is now in Florence, Italy and it is, of course, because of the present war, impossible to secure a photograph of it in order to determine whether or not the handwriting is the same as that of the Janina Gospels and of Sinai 157. We feel, however, that we are safe in assuming that the last will and testament of Theoktistos was written by the same scribe who wrote the Janina Gospels and Sinai 157.

An analysis of the text of the Janina Gospels shows it to be a very good example of von Soden's I^φ r group. It is interesting to note that Sinai 157, which, as we have already seen, was written by the same scribe who wrote our codex, is cited by von Soden as one of the best examples of this particular type of text. In spite of this close similarity in type of text, however, and in spite of the fact that both manuscripts were written by the same scribe, they are not identical, that is, they were not copied from the same exemplar.

By being able to place the period of our scribe's activity in the middle third of the twelfth century, we find ourselves within considerably less than a hundred years of the founding of the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist. Christodoulos, the founder of the monastery, so dominated the scene, not only during his lifetime but even after his death, that the story of his life is almost the story of the monastery.³

Christodoulos was born in the year 1020 in a little village near Nicæa, and at an early age his education was entrusted to a priest. As soon as the boy learned to read, he applied himself to his studies with a fervent passion. It is said that even as a youth he had no other dream than to serve Christ. At the age of twenty he retired to a monastery on Mount Olympia in Bithynia and there gave himself over to a most rigorous asceticism. At the end of three years, his humility had gained for him the name by which he is known to history, Christodoulos, Slave of Christ.

Christodoulos, however, was not destined to spend his life in the quiet of a mountain retreat. Before he was twenty-five a visit to Rome had resulted in his becoming a soldier of the church militant. The next few years saw him flee for his life before the advancing Turks, not once, but several times. At one time, he was archimandrite of the Monastery of Saint Paul on Mount Latros; at another time, he was abbot of the Kabaloures; at still another time, he was the head of a monastery on Mount Pile on the island of Cos.

Eventually, Christodoulos made his way to Constantinople and peti-

³ Probably the best sources of information in regard to both the life of Christodoulos and the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist are: Edouard Le Barbier, *Saint Christodule et la Réforme des Couvents Grecs au XI^e* (Paris, Firmin Didst Frères, Fils et Compagnie, 1863); Charles Diehl, "Le trésor et la bibliothèque de Patmos au commencement du 13^e siècle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, I (1892), pp. 488-525; Franciscus Miklosich and Josephus Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Græca Ævi Sacra et Profana* (Vindobanæ: Carolus Gerold, 1890), VI.

tioned the emperor to assign to him some new territory in exchange for those lands which he had accumulated. He pointed out that to live the ascetic life had become impossible on Cos and that an uninhabited and inaccessible island would be more desirable. When Christodoulos spoke of an uninhabited island, he had in mind the island of Patmos, whose chief wealth was the memory of John, the author of the Apocalypse. At length, the emperor, Alexis, urged to do so by his mother, accorded the island of Patmos to Christodoulos.

The ownership of an entire island, however, was not enough for Christodoulos. He wished to be an independent and absolute sovereign. He wished to found, not only a monastery, but an independent state which would be reserved exclusively for those who would pledge themselves to abide by the rules which he would lay down. It was necessary that this independent state should be detached completely from the empire in order that it should not be dependent upon anyone for its religious life, its social life, or its political life. It was necessary that not even the patriarch of Constantinople himself should be able to challenge the decrees of Christodoulos. In the month of April, 1088, Alexis, declared that

Patmos shall be, from today, for ever and ever, entirely separate from the territory under our imperial power and laws. . . . It belongs to the monks, entirely, without any charge, in complete ownership and in complete sovereignty, inviolably, eternally. . . . They do not have to render an account to any person. . . . Free, independent, the monastery is self-governing, under the rule of Christodoulos, and neither the monastery, nor its dependencies, nor the island itself shall ever be subject to the imperial authority.⁴

Fortified with this decree from the emperor, Christodoulos left Constantinople with a colony of workmen. In addition to the emperor's *golden bull*, he had taken care to secure a mandamus from the patriarch which declared that his proposed monastery should be independent of the bishops.

Patmos was uninhabited in 1088, although some ruins and some inscriptions bore witness to an ancient population which had dwelt upon its mountains. In the centre of the southern half of the island is the Mountain of Saint John. On the north side of this mountain is the Cave of the Apocalypse in which John is said to have received his vision and in which our scribe, John a Monk, says he wrote Sinai 157. It was on this mountain that Christodoulos determined to build. A more unpromising location for the establishment of a monastery cannot be imagined. A description of Patmos which was made by the imperial commissioner who was charged with handing the island over to Christodoulos reads:

⁴ Franciscus Miklosich and Josephus Müller, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 45.

Having completely covered the island of Patmos, we have found it to be uninhabited, uncultivated, covered with an impenetrable growth of brambles and thorns, and entirely arid because of a lack of water. On the entire island we have not found any running water or springs; there are only a few shallow wells which, more often than not, fail to give enough water . . . to make possible the cultivation of even a few acres of land. Even these few acres of cultivable land are hidden away and, as it were, almost choked among the mountains. All of the rest of the island is a rough, mountainous, impassible country. Scarcely more than one-quarter of the cultivable land is capable of being worked with a plow. All of the rest of it must be worked with the mattock and the grubbing-axe, and irrigated with the sweat and blood of the cultivator; it is little more than stones and abrupt mountain slopes. We have not seen the slightest trace of either cultivated or wild trees with the exception of about a score of dead pear trees. We have not seen a single building except a poor private chapel which was erected to the memory of Saint John on the spot where he is said to have seen the visions and to have performed marvelous miracles.⁵

To transport a colony to Patmos was to transport it to a field of battle. Both monks and workmen were forced to struggle against nature and to labor every day in order to gain food and shelter. We can well understand why they longed to return to the peacefulness of their former homes. The soul of Christodoulos was, more than once, grieved by their complaints. At its best, life on the island was dreary. Storms beat constantly over its bare rocks. Constantinople and its taverns were far away. The workmen longed for their wives and for their families; the monks longed for the pleasant hills and meadows of Anatolia. They conspired together to leave the island and to abandon their leader.

When Christodoulos heard of this impending danger, he reproached the conspirators for their inconstancy. The monks were soon appeased when he began to share all of their dangers and all of their sufferings. By the sheer force of his example he regained their loyalty. They did not dare to betray the thin old man who carried stones and lime all day and who prayed all night. The loyalty of the workmen, however, was not so easily regained. Their desire to be with their wives and their children triumphed over their admiration for their aged leader. Christodoulos was obliged to lift the ban which prohibited women from stepping foot upon the island. He consoled himself by assigning a fixed territory to them in the northern part of the island at the most distant point from the monastery. During five days of the week the laborers had to work and to live on the half of the island which was set aside as holy ground. During that time they could not even so much as see their families. From Friday night until Monday morning they were permitted to live with their wives.

In a short time the half of the island which was reserved for the workmen and their families became the most prosperous part of Patmos. The women spun their wool, tilled their gardens, and cared for their

⁵ *Ibid.*

homes; the children guarded the pigs and the goats; and, the men, during the two days allowed to them, cleared the land and built and planted. Soon a prosperous little village had grown up.

It was only because of the concessions which Christodoulos made to the workmen that the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist was built and the island of Patmos colonized. The arrival of the women and the children, however, at first, greatly increased the amount of money necessary for the support of the monastery. His income was not sufficient to meet the needs of the people, and Christodoulos was forced to appeal to the emperor for aid. In response to his plea, the emperor returned the Kabaloures and the monastery on Mount Pile to him. In addition, he gave him the little island of Pharmacon, the metochion of Stylon on the island of Crete, and a mill, vineyards, fields, and serfs on the island of Lemnos. All of these possessions enjoyed the same privileges as did Patmos. The governors of the territories which were given to Christodoulos were no longer able to collect taxes on them or to avail themselves of the services of the serfs. Thus, we see Christodoulos invested with all of the rights of a feudal lord without having to bear any of the responsibilities of that position. He paid no taxes, and neither his monks nor his serfs had to bear arms.

During the five years from 1088 to 1093, Christodoulos continued to enlarge and to fortify the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist. It rapidly became the most renowned monastery in the archipelago. Tradition tells us that God completed that which man had begun. One day, in a small valley, a spring gushed forth at the command of Christodoulos, and the citron trees blossomed. On another day, when the inhabitants of the neighboring islands were in desperate need of bread, they went to Patmos to ask for aid. Suddenly, on an island that did not produce a single head of wheat, there was found enough bread to feed all of the people. Such miracles were said to have been repeated more than once, with the result that the monastery was better provisioned than any other place in the empire.

When Alexis Comnenus advanced to the west against the Bohemians, the Seljuk Turks, finding the east unprotected, began to pour into all parts of the empire. They descended upon the archipelago and pillaged the islands. Fear overcame the monks of Patmos, and once again Christodoulos thought that they must flee for their lives. They carried away their treasures and left their serfs to the mercy of the Turks.

Christodoulos and eighty of his monks found refuge in Eubœa with a certain Eumathios who gave them food and clothing and shelter. After the caloyers had left the island of Patmos, it did not contain more than a dozen families, but not one of them fled. The men stayed to fight for

their homes and for their families; the women stayed to protect the land on which but five years before they had not been thought worthy to stand.

Yet in the end it was not the Turks but the government officials who invaded Patmos. Profiting by the absence of Christodoulos, they forced each family on the island either to provide one soldier for the army or to pay the wages of one soldier. In April, 1094, however, Christodoulos succeeded in getting Christophoros Magistros to exempt the residents of Patmos from military service.

Christodoulos, by this time overcome by his advanced age and by his constant struggle against the Empire and against his own monks, felt that he was nearing the end of his life. He had given way to complete despair at having been forced to abandon Patmos. He talked constantly of returning to his beloved island, but his monks always found ways of delaying the journey. By the year 1100 he realized that never again would he be able to return to Patmos. He hastened, therefore, to give to Sabbas, one of his most devoted followers, many of the powers which normally resided in the abbot. He gave him his books and the right to dispose of the revenues of the monastery. Eleven months later, in the year 1101, Christodoulos died. His last thoughts were for Patmos. With his last words, he urged the monks to return to the island, and he implored them to take his body with them.

The last wishes of the aged man were fulfilled. The monks returned to Patmos. The residents of Eubœa, however, refused to allow the body of Christodoulos to be moved. At the end of a year the monks from Patmos descended upon Eubœa at night, recaptured the body of their former leader, and took it to the island.

Immediately upon their return to Patmos, the monks had replaced Sabbas with an abbot of their own choice. He was Joseph the Jasite. The world with all of its vanities and its temptations did not inspire the same horror in Joseph the Jasite that it had in Christodoulos. Eventually the restricted zone on the island disappeared; gradually the layman was allowed to approach the Mountain of Saint John. The women and the children followed the men to the monastery itself. By this time many of the monks were from families which lived upon the island. They were glad to have their friends and their relatives visit them and to receive the preserves, the soups, the oil, and the spices which they brought.

The ascetic life which had been counseled by Christodoulos became more and more distasteful to the monks of Patmos. The refectory became intolerable. At last, the abbot was forced to distribute among the monks the sums that were reserved for the common table. Each ate what he wished and when he wished. From that time on, the monks were anxious that their number should diminish in order that each might receive a

larger allotment for food and have larger living quarters. A kitchen and a dining room were necessary for each man. Young boys who aspired to the diaconate served the monks as cupbearers and as cooks.

The rule of the monastery had forbidden the ownership of any private property, but the rule had been written for a desert and not for a prosperous village like that on Patmos. The monks felt that they should not be dressed as beggars when they were seen by the laity. God had ordained them to assist in the holy offices and to keep the fasts but not to wear coarse, ill-fitting clothes. Accordingly, robes of blue- and green- and rose-colored silk replaced their rough garments.

Less than a half century after the death of Christodoulos, during the reign of Manuel Comnenus, two parties were formed in the monastery. One party, that of Bishop Icaria, supported the abbot Theoktistos. This Theoktistos, it is to be remembered, is the abbot for whom Sinai 157 was written and during whose term of office the Janina Gospels was probably written. The other party in the monastery was that of the patriarch. The bishop's party was the stronger. He obtained from the abbot Theoktistos the written promise that his name would be mentioned in the liturgy in place of that of the patriarch and that the seat of honor in the church would be reserved for him. The power of this party lasted until the death of Theoktistos.

When Theoktistos died, the members of the opposing party went to Constantinople to plead before the emperor. They showed him the *golden bull* which had guaranteed the independence of the monastery. In 1159, the emperor confirmed again its independence. Once more the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist prospered, and by the end of the twelfth century, under the abbot Arsenios it supported about one hundred fifty monks.

Contrary to many of the Byzantine ascetics, Christodoulos seems to have had a strong sense of the importance of literary activity. In the rules which he laid down for the guidance of the monks,⁶ he had written, "If anyone is capable in the art of writing, he is bound, with the authorization of the abbot, to exercise the talents with which nature has endowed him." It is perfectly possible, therefore, that the scribe who signed himself "John a Monk" did not write Sinai 157 to be the personal property of Theoktistos. When he said that he had written the manuscript for the abbot, he may have meant that he was writing with the authorization of the abbot.

Christodoulos upheld the rule which he had formulated by his own example. While on Mount Latros, he had collected a large library. So much value did he attach to this collection of books that when the Turkish

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-80.

invasion menaced the safety of the monastery, his first thought was for his precious manuscripts. "In fleeing," says a note on one of the Latros manuscripts, "he carried away with him all of the books which he was able."⁷ Christodoulos himself told of the work it was to get all of the volumes transported to Cos and then later to Constantinople, and then he added, "If I had not acted in this way, all of these books would have been destroyed."⁸

When Christodoulos founded the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist, he demanded of the emperor and of the patriarch that they give him a part of the Latros manuscripts which he had saved. He succeeded, thus, in obtaining about one-fourth of the Latros collection. With these volumes as a nucleus he soon increased the size of his new library. Throughout his life he watched over these volumes with a passionate devotion. When he was forced to flee from Patmos and to go to Euboea, he once again took his books with him. During the last days of his life, when completely occupied with measures to assure the future of the monastery, his books were one of his chief concerns. No precaution seemed to him to be superfluous as he strove to guarantee their preservation. He had a catalogue made of all of them and at the end of it, by his own hand, he assigned them to the care of Sabbas in order that not even one book might be lost. He prohibited future heads of the monastery from ever parting with any volume of the collection. In order to guarantee that Latros should never recover any of the books which he had gotten from there, he wrote:

If ever anyone attempts, in the name of the Monastery of Stylos or of any other monastery of Latros, to claim back any of the books which were given to me by the very holy patriarch, let there be no recognition of his demand, and let there be called down upon him the curse of the three hundred and eighteen holy fathers and my curse.⁹

In his last will, Christodoulos bequeathed his manuscripts to the monastery "in order that they might remain eternally in this monastery on Patmos."¹⁰

The successors of Christodoulos were no less anxious to enrich the library of their monastery than he had been. Some of them, such as Joseph the Jasite (1101-1128), collected many valuable manuscripts. When he died, he left all of them to the monastery. Arsenios, who was abbot of the monastery from about 1188 to about 1201, copied several books with his own hand, and many of the monks followed his example.

At the end of the twelfth century gifts of books flowed into the monastery. They came from Rhodes, from Chios, from Crete, and from

⁷ Henri Omont, "Note sur un ms. grec du mont Latros," *Revue des Études grecques*, I, pp. 337.

⁸ Franciscus Miklosich and Josephus Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

many other places. Those who gave the books to the monastery, as the subscriptions in some of the manuscripts still preserved in the library attest, believed that in making the gifts they were doing a charitable work and that they were, thus, assuring their own eternal salvation. They did not spare any expense that the books might be beautiful and that they might lend prestige to the monastery. The subscription in one manuscript which was copied and presented to the library by a monk from Rhodes gives us an idea of the literary activity in the monastery at this time. This humble monk wrote:

I have consecrated this book to the holy and venerable monastery of Patmos, not that the monastery does not possess any like it. Such a thought be far from me! What monastery includes more learned men and holy calligraphers than the monastery of the Theologian?¹¹

We know that the Patmos library was an important one by the year 1201. The *Catalogue*¹² which was made in that year lists 267 parchment manuscripts and 63 paper manuscripts, a total of 330 volumes. Liturgical books and the writings of the Fathers occupy a preponderant place among them.

In the years which have intervened since the beginning of the thirteenth century, however, this great library has been sadly depleted of its most ancient treasures. The *Catalogue* of 1355, for example, already listed many precious volumes as being badly damaged. A heart-breaking carelessness on the part of the monks has been a major factor in the loss of these priceless volumes. A second major source of loss to the library undoubtedly was the many loans which it made. In the thirteenth century its books were loaned quite liberally. In the margins of the *Catalogue* of 1201 and on its verso there are many notations which indicate that certain books had been loaned to other monasteries. Among the many borrowers from the library were two monasteries which seem to have been treated with special favor. They were the metochia of Pyrgos and Cos. Pyrgos borrowed eleven volumes at one time, and Cos ten. In both cases, the volumes which were borrowed formed almost a complete set of the liturgical books which were necessary for the celebration of the divine office. Loans were also made to the metochia of Leros, Saint George, Saint Panteleimon, and Saint Nicetas. The monasteries of Saint Mercurios and of Saint Paul of Latros also borrowed from Patmos. It is to be remembered that it was the Latros monastery from which Christodoulos received so many books for his Patmos library. Not only were books loaned to Latros, however, but sometimes, in spite of the injunction of Christodoulos, certain manuscripts were given to it by way of restitution. The monks of

¹¹ John Sakkelion, *Πατμιακή Βιβλιοθήκη* (Athens: Alexander Papageorgios, 1890), p. 95.

¹² Published by Charles Diehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-525.

Strobelos, the anchorites of Kalymnos, and the clergy of Samos were also listed among the borrowers from Patmos. Even private individuals who were related to the monks or whose positions were such as to recommend them were granted library privileges. There is one case of a book having been sent as far as Crete to the father of one of the monks.

Through the centuries the fortunes of the Patmos Library have varied with those of the monastery itself. It was exposed to attack and to plunder by the Turks, by the pirates, and by the Venetians. It has never ceased, however, to receive an almost constant stream of gifts, until today—or at least at the outbreak of the Second World War—it contains nearly 800 volumes. Many of these, to be sure, are of a very recent date.

From what we have said, it is evident that the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist merits a very considerable place in the literary history of the East, particularly during the Middle Ages. On the coasts of Greek Anatolia and on the islands of the archipelago, the monks of Patmos kept alive for several centuries the last rays of intellectual life. For monasteries and small villages alike, the monastery of Patmos was not only a religious centre, it was a centre of learning and of culture as well.

